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## THE FUTURE OF JAPAN.

BY HIS EXCELLENCY, THE JAPANESE MINISTER AT WASHINGTON, S. KURINO.

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THERE are many important reasons why the people of this country should be interested in the future of Japan. Apart from the peculiar historical ties which unite the two nations, the changing circumstances of their respective positions promise to give enhanced importance to their relations. In the past, Japan has received from the United States proofs of a spirit of altruism rare, if not unique, in the intercourse of nations. The good will thus so strongly evinced still exists, but the people of this country are apparently awakening to the fact that they have more than a merely sentimental interest in the momentous events which are now transpiring in the East. Hitherto, in relation to Eastern affairs, circumstances have compelled the United States to play to a great extent the part of a spectator. Their own domestic concerns have absorbed the attention of the people, and foreign intercourse and trade and commerce, with Oriental peoples at least, have been matters of secondary interest. It is true that Commodore Perry made the first treaty with Japan, and that the United States have always held a leading position not alone in that country, but in China also. But it is not going too far to say that the great American Republic has not yet utilized to the full the opportunities it has had in this regard. Now, however, as I have said, there are signs of a change. The motives of enlightened self-interest, which are, after all, the chief springs of national action, are beginning to assert themselves, and there is evident in this country a growing disposition to recognize the fact that no other Western power has greater or more vital interests in the East than the United States. The relations of the two countries in the past have given proof

of a partial realization of this fact ; in the future the feeling must inevitably grow and strengthen.

Whatever may be the merits of our present controversy with China, and however great the advantages we have achieved, I do not believe that any thoughtful Japanese will regard them either as our ultimate object or as the consummation of our hopes. We have attracted the world's notice, it is true, by what we have done in this war ; but, with the pride which every patriotic Japanese must take in his country's success, there must go the wish to show that we are capable of triumphs in peace as well as of victories in war. Military strength and military aptitude are vital factors in the well-being of every nation, but they are not all. The display of these qualities by the Japanese nation may be what has drawn upon them the eye of the world just at present. That would, of course, be only natural. War is spectacular, and when successfully waged becomes a sure title to the respect, if not the esteem, of mankind. But Japan has not been striving all these years for this one object. Her military affairs have been carefully developed only as an indispensable adjunct to the national welfare. They have not, however, absorbed any greater share of attention than they would have received from any other nation in similar circumstances. We hope that we have made advances in other directions quite as remarkable as in our adoption of Western methods of warfare, and we believe that with us in the future, as in the past, no more consideration will be devoted to questions of military defense and military prestige than a due regard for the honor and welfare of the Empire may require.

This much of explanation is necessary, because it seems to be assumed in certain quarters that Japanese progress since the Restoration has been confined to the acquisition of military strength, and that the future policy of the nation will be directed upon similar lines. The idea is an entirely mistaken one. Perhaps there is no better way of showing the error that underlies it, than by describing the changes that have taken place in the military system of Japan since our Emperor assumed the full exercise of the prerogatives of the throne in 1868. The Shogunate, as history shows, had been dependent upon the samurai, or ancient military class, for the maintenance of its power and prestige. They were the backbone of the feudal system, of which the Shogunate itself was the most complete epitome, at least in comparatively modern times. The

endurance of that system for more than two centuries almost without change was due, in no small degree, to the special rights and immunities conferred by the laws of Iyeyasu upon the favored military class. This system had its advantages and disadvantages. While it preserved, no doubt, a spirit of chivalrous loyalty and of complete self-abnegation at the dictates of prescribed duty, it also created a class distinction which was not in harmony with the new order of things. One of the first problems which confronted the Imperial government upon the passing away of the Shogunate was how to dispose of the services of the samurai. Many of them naturally assumed new obligations and entered upon the discharge of new duties. Many others, however, did not assimilate so readily with the changed conditions of the times. The government was able, by a system of pensions, substituted for the support which they had received up to that time from feudal lords, to supply the wants of a portion of their retainers. But these pensions were necessarily inadequate, and a great deal of distress ensued. Revolts and *émeutes* of a more or less serious character followed in different parts of the Empire, proving that the existence of a large class of men trained exclusively to the use of arms was a menace to the public order. The remedy applied was radical. A law was passed providing for general conscription among all classes of Japanese, thus removing the danger of a dominant military class by the adoption of a method of maintaining the military strength of the Empire similar to that employed by the majority of civilized nations. Thus, at one blow, the samurai lost the prestige they had enjoyed as the sole privileged military caste. The drastic nature of this measure can be appreciated best by one who fully understands the peculiar relations in which the samurai stood in ancient times to the rest of the population of Japan. The change was as complete as it would have been in one of the countries of Europe in the Middle Ages, had the privilege of wearing the spurs of knighthood been conferred by one stroke of the pen upon every hewer of wood and tiller of soil in the land.

This one act, it seems to me, solves the question of militarism so far as the future of Japan is concerned. Our standing army is not large in proportion to the population, and it is recruited impartially from every class. Recent events have proved that it is efficient, but they do not prove that it has been created and main-

tained with a view to prospective conquest or for the purpose of exercising a dominating influence in domestic affairs, as some critics have alleged. I believe it will be admitted that the system upon which it rests has been capably and honestly administered. It should also be equally apparent to all who have full knowledge of the facts that that system is only one of a number of changes which have been introduced into our domestic polity, not at haphazard or by accident, but deliberately, and in pursuance of a general, harmonious plan.

Perhaps no event has occurred of recent years in Japan which has attracted so much attention as the establishment of a constitutional and parliamentary form of government. Certainly there is no change which is liable to have a more potent influence upon the future of the nation. Here again our critics have gone astray. It has been assumed that this important step was the result, if not of a sudden whim, at least of a resolve hastily taken and quickly carried into execution. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

The plan of establishing a constitutional government in Japan was formed upon the downfall of the Shiogunate in 1868. Upon assuming the full control of the administrative affairs of the Empire our Emperor took a solemn oath, which is the foundation of the constitutional form of government perfected in 1890. The design thus announced was kept constantly in view during all of the administrative changes which ensued. The formation of such a design was most natural under the circumstances. It was in no sense the Utopian dream of visionaries, but the result of the deliberate judgment of practical men of affairs. Japan had been dominated until then by an autocracy which ruled the country with a rod of iron. Our lawful sovereign, and his ancestors before him, had been deprived of the practical exercise of the prerogatives of sovereignty. It is true that the virtual usurpers could not supplant the lawful line of Emperors in the affection and reverence of the people ; but, acting as the deputies, as it were, of the rightful rulers, they exercised substantially all the functions of government. The vital change which occurred in 1868 naturally produced a rebound. Our Emperor and the people alike had suffered from the same causes. He had been deprived of the control of the Empire, and they had suffered under a form of despotism which had concerned itself even with the most

trivial affairs of private life. What more natural, therefore, than that our Emperor should assure his subjects that the assumption by him of the exercise of all the prerogatives of the throne meant for them a fuller measure of personal liberty and a more direct participation in the affairs of government? Such a declaration was a logical sequence of the situation. In another sense it was a most statesmanlike measure, for it gave to the reverence and affection which the Japanese people have always felt for the throne an element of firm stability which time cannot shake.

The history of our country proves that in ancient times, before the military shioguns had usurped power, the ancestors of the Emperor exercised a mild and beneficent sway, which created much closer and more cordial relations between the governing and the governed than was subsequently the case. Consequently, the modern changes in the domestic administration of Japan have, for the people, to some degree the significance of a return to an older and better order of things. It is a fact, moreover, that even under the Shiogunate traces of ancient liberties in the shape of forms of partial self-government still remained among the people. They were only partial, and were confined to local affairs, but they remained as memories of popular rights once enjoyed and now revived and broadened by the restoration of the Imperial House.

The methods adopted by the Emperor of Japan in conferring a constitutional form of government upon the nation are well known. The place which that act has taken in history is, also, I believe, equally well recognized. Such an act of voluntary abnegation by a sovereign of a portion of his prerogatives has been seldom, if ever, seen before. As I have tried to show, it was not the result of sudden impulse, but of deliberate and wise design. In proof of this is the fact that it was not finally effected until after extensive and thorough preparation. One change after another was made in the methods of administering public affairs in the years intervening between His Majesty's declaration of his intention to promulgate a constitution and to establish a parliament, and the final consummation of that purpose with the object of adequately preparing for its successful accomplishment. The most important of these was the establishment of prefectural and municipal assemblies, each having a certain control of local af-

fairs, and each designed to educate the people in the exercise of rights which, later on, they would be called upon to employ in a wider field. Finally, as a crowning work, came the constitution and the parliament in 1890.

Of the results of this final change it would, perhaps, be better for me to let the facts themselves speak. But it is certain that constitutional government is no longer an experiment in Japan. It has passed the empirical stage and is firmly established as one of the institutions of the country. No better proof of this could be afforded than the success with which it has weathered the stormy years of its infancy. The duties which it has imposed upon the national legislature have not been performed in a perfunctory way, but have been exercised in a manner sufficiently alert and vigilant to prove that the new form of government possesses an abundant store of vitality. Of the conflicts which have at times occurred between the legislative and the executive branches of the government, it would, of course, not be becoming in me to speak; but this much I may with propriety say, that no such conflict has ever been so severe as to produce in Japan anything more than is usual in political contests in other countries. There have been storms upon the political horizon, and bitterness of party feeling; but, throughout all, the limitations of legal right and of constitutional prerogative have been respected. The attitude of the Japanese parliament at the present moment is to my mind a proof of the soundness of the basis, and of the strength of the principles, upon which the new order of things rests. Its patriotic support of the government at home and abroad is abundant evidence that it is capable of wisely exercising its prerogatives.

In estimating the effect of the establishment of a constitutional government upon the future of Japan it is, of course, easy to go astray. I, as a Japanese, may take too sanguine a view of its possibilities and may expect too much from it. I am not foolish enough, however, to claim that it would be possible by some artificial process to make the Japanese people capable of enjoying advantages of this kind if they have no real capacity for utilizing them. We are not attempting a miracle in Japan. Our sovereign believed that we *are* capable of some measure of self-government and graciously conferred it upon us. It remains with us to prove that his trust was not misplaced. All that I

claim is that up to this time we have done enough to at least earn respectful consideration for our enterprise. Its ultimate success or failure after all will only affect us, and it has surely been carried far enough to be free from the censure of those self appointed critics who relegate all Asiatic nations to one plane, and are surprised, not to say pained, when their predictions of disaster are not fulfilled. We have been called copyists and imitators by some such, but this I distinctly deny. We have before us a problem involving solely our own welfare, and we are trying to work it out for our own best good. In doing this we have not sought to imitate for the sake of novelty, but to utilize those elements of Western civilization and modern progress which seemed best adapted to supply the necessities of our national development. Of course, anyone is free to express an opinion upon our progress and our achievements, not to say our morals, our manners and the like ; but all such criticism is not worthy of the attention which much of it receives. Any one may, for example, like a very distinguished critic who recently spent three weeks in Japan, write a book purporting to describe the whole political and social fabric of the Empire, not to mention the most secret aims and ambitions of its rulers, but Japanese at least will be pardoned if they do not acknowledge the value of such criticism. As to what the future may have in store for constitutional government in Japan, we can only point to the past, and express the belief that the future will not be less fruitful of good. We alone of Asiatic peoples have chosen to take this step voluntarily, and without the least pressure or insistence from abroad. No foreign influence has been operative either in the inception or in the performance of our purpose. This assertion may be regarded as an exhibition of that species of self-conceit which some of the critics to whom I have alluded are fond of classing as a trait of the Japanese character. I do not make it with any intention of implying that we consider ourselves sufficient to ourselves, but merely as another proof of the fact that we are laboring upon projects which we regard as purely domestic, solely for the purpose of improving our own condition, and not with any design of impressing the rest of the world either with our knowledge or our wisdom.

The change in the treaty relations existing between Japan and the Western Powers must not be forgotten in any forecast of



the nation's future. The old treaties were the result of conditions which have entirely disappeared. So far as those portions are concerned which relate to restrictions upon Japan's right to regulate the control of her own foreign and domestic trade, some change would undoubtedly have been made long ago. The difficulty has been in the presumed necessity for the maintenance of the jurisdictional capitulations. These, it will be remembered, were established at a time when Japan first entered into intercourse with the outer world. They absolved aliens in Japan from trial by native courts and punishment in accordance with the provisions of native law. They were rendered necessary, as Mr. Marcy stated, by the fact that "cruel and unusual punishments" were inflicted under the laws of most Oriental countries. In Japan the necessity for such a safeguard has not existed, certainly within the last twenty years. But such safeguards instead of being relaxed with the lapse of time and with the lessening need have, if anything, been strengthened and increased. By a species of free construction which has no warrant in the written text of any conventional agreement undertaken by Japan, "consular jurisdiction," intended originally for the protection of the lives and property of aliens resident in Japan, has grown into "extra territorial jurisdiction," which is held to absolve every such alien from the observance of Japanese law, no matter how just and necessary. Meanwhile, the old order has completely changed. The small foreign "settlements," where foreigners formerly dwelt as in cities of refuge, have grown into large and prosperous commercial cities; foreign life and property is as safe in every part of Japan as it would be in London or New York. Complete systems of codified law, based upon the best models, have been adopted and are in successful operation; while no effort has been spared to establish a competent and an educated judiciary entirely independent of executive control. To all of these guarantees is added the even higher assurance which constitutional government gives for the safety of life, of liberty, and of private rights. The existence of such a state of things side by side with the system of foreign jurisdiction now in vogue, is too great an anomaly to continue. Happily its end is now in view, as treaties have already been concluded with several of the leading foreign powers (doubtless to be followed by the rest in due time) which will restore to Japan

in a little more than four years from now the complete control of her foreign relations.

One of the first results of this changed condition of affairs will be the complete opening of the whole Japanese Empire to foreign trade and residence. During the existence of consular jurisdiction it has been impossible for the Japanese Government to permit foreigners to freely reside in all parts of the Empire and thereby to practically carry with them the immunities originally designed only for their protection in a few open ports. In individual cases such a concession would perhaps have made little or no difference, but as a privilege generally conceded it would have been productive of innumerable embarrassments. All this will be changed with the inauguration of the new treaties, and aliens will be at liberty to come and go, and to remain in all parts of Japan, as freely as native subjects.

But the most important and the most far-reaching consequence of this new order of things will, in my judgment, be the creation of improved relations between Japanese and foreigners. The maintenance of consular jurisdiction has undoubtedly been a potent influence in arousing some degree of distrust and dislike on both sides. The erection of such *imperia in imperio*—as the open ports have of necessity been—on the territory of an independent nation, could not but be distasteful to the people of that nation, even while the necessity existed. And when that has disappeared, the continuance of such an anomalous state of things must become doubly irksome. I do not mean to say that we have any reason to complain of the many upright and self-respecting foreigners who have taken up their residence among us. But there are others who have sometimes taken advantage of their favored position to exhibit a degree of independence from wholesome restraint in word and action which they would not think of showing to the authorities or the people of a country where they were not similarly protected. The friction and mutual misunderstandings thus engendered, must disappear with the removal of the cause of irritation, and foreigners as well as Japanese must then enjoy the benefits of a more healthy, because a more normal, condition of affairs.

The disappearance of consular jurisdiction and the opening of the whole Empire to foreign trade and enterprise will also, in all probability, have a stimulating effect upon the commerce and in-

dustries of the country. Under existing conditions foreigners are of necessity precluded from participation in many of the pursuits which have added to the national wealth by the development of the country's resources. The growth of Japanese commerce and the increase in the extent and variety of the manufacturing industries of the Empire seem to be among the most assured probabilities of the future. The volume of Japanese commerce has nearly quadrupled within the past twenty years. In equal, if not in greater, measure, the manufacturing, mining and other industries of the country have rapidly progressed. The growth and manufacture of silk and of cotton goods, in particular, have shown signs of wonderful development. In the latter article domestic manufactures now almost wholly supply domestic demands, and manufacturers are looking for foreign markets. This fact is of interest to American cotton growers, since the import of American raw cotton into Japan has so largely increased in the past few years that there is every prospect of a large and prosperous trade in this article alone.

The extension of Japanese railway systems, the increase in steamship lines, and the general inauguration of industrial enterprises of all descriptions, show no signs of diminution even in these times of commercial and financial depression. Railways extend to every important point in the Empire, whereas, in 1872, there were only eighteen miles of railway. Steamship lines under Japanese control also connect the ports of the Empire with all the principal ports on the continent of Asia, including Bombay. What the future progress of the nation will be in these and in other similar directions, it is, of course, impossible to predict, but of one fact there can be no doubt; that the whole Empire, in every department of labor and enterprise, has partaken of the forward movement which began with Japan's emergence from the sleep of centuries, and that, while failure has been met in some directions, the general advance has been so marked and so successful as to afford the amplest promise for future prosperity and continued progress.

This is, of necessity, only a hasty and an imperfect summary of some of the influences which will most probably affect the future of Japan. But general and incomplete as it no doubt is, it will have accomplished the object for which it was penned if it shows the reader that in far-away Japan there are things being

done which are worthy of the serious study of students of human progress. It will, at least, have served some useful purpose if it proves to him that what Japan has done, is doing, and hopes to do, cannot justly be regarded as a spectacle set up for the world's amusement, but must be taken as the serious work of earnest men striving for a definite and well-fixed purpose. The man who studies the history of Japan during the last quarter of a century in that spirit, while he may perceive that mistakes have been made, will not, I feel assured, fail to discover the sincere purpose which actuates the only Asiatic people who have sought to improve their condition and to strengthen their position, as an independent and self-respecting nation, by voluntarily adopting and practically utilizing the elements of Western progress and civilization.

S. KURINO.